

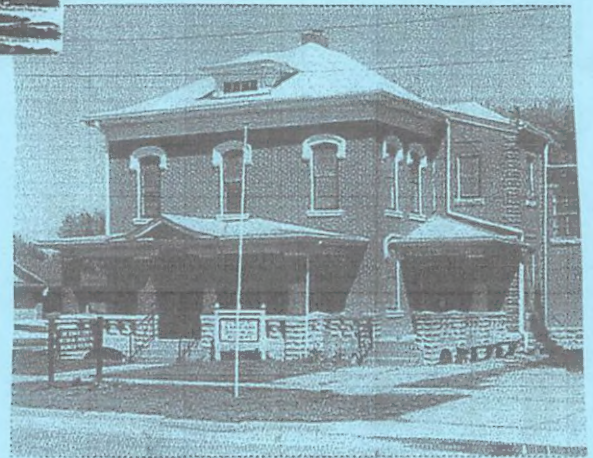
# NEMAHA COUNTY JAIL AND SHERIFF'S RESIDENCE



1879



1907



2005

**LISTED ON THE KANSAS & NATIONAL  
REGISTRY OF HISTORIC PLACES: 2004**



# Nemaha County Jail and Sheriff's Residence

## Annex I & II

The Nemaha County Jail and Sheriff's Residence was approved by the Kansas Historic Sites Board of Review on November 8, 2003, for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register of Historic Places accepted the Nemaha County Jail and Sheriff's Residence on May 19, 2004.

### Description

The Nemaha County jail and sheriff's residence (1879, 1907) is located on four lots (12,13,14,15 of block 61) on the southwest corner of the intersection of North Sixth and Nemaha streets of Seneca (population of 2,000), Nemaha County, Kansas. The building maintains a high degree of interior and exterior architectural integrity and stands as one of the oldest sheriff's residence and jail remaining in Kansas today. The red brick, two-story structure rests on a foundation of limestone blocks, laid in mortar and a natural bed of sand. A renovation in 1907 enlarged the jail, added a tower and built a second floor to the jail. Today, the sheriff's residence and jail are connected with a modern brick addition, a museum annex.

The original jail and sheriff's residence is described in Andreas's History of State of Kansas (1883), as follows:

*It is a two-story brick structure with an L, the main building, 32x25 feet, containing six rooms conveniently arranged for the residence of the jailor. The L, 29x26 feet, contains three of J. Pauley's patent steel cells, each of sufficient size to accommodate four persons, while above the jailor's residence are two rooms used for the incarceration of female prisoners and those retained for minor offenses. In connection with the building is a large cistern and facilities for using the water to the best advantage in case of fire. The building cost \$9,965, and is in every way a credit to the (Nemaha) county.*

The "L" shaped building has a western façade orientation with overall measurements of fifty-one feet and eleven inches east to west and thirty-feet and eight inches north to south. The exterior walls are eight to twelve inches in thickness covered with uniform dark, red brick. The building is surmounted by a hipped roof over the sheriff's residence and a flat roof over the jail. A chimney rises from the northern elevation of the residence.

The building was used until 1905 when deterioration of the floors of the jail began to raise concerns, complaints and jail-breakouts. Some escaped through the roof. One prisoner succeeded in making his escape by walking out the brick wall. The Nemaha County Commissioners accepted the bid from Shaul & Assenmacher on June 5, 1907 to renovate the building for \$9,851. A new second floor was added to the jail section with concrete floors and windows mirroring the first floor windows. The new, second floor jail addition added an exercise room and two more steel clad, maximum-security P.J. Pauley cells. Since the foundation of the jail needed restoration, the first floor jail building was enlarged by twenty feet and rearranged with a utility room and the original three P.J. Pauley cells, steel floors repaired.

As part of the 1907 renovation, the angle of pitch was increased over the sheriff's residence and the roof over the jail was built flat across. A tower with cupola was added to the intersection of the sheriff's residence and the jail on the south side of the building. In the new tower, cement steps were added which lead to a small covered porch on ground level and a bathroom on the second floor. Nestled back into the nook created by the tower on the south, a new porch was built. A western façade porch was extended to cover the full side of the building with cement arches decorating the stone railing. The terrazzo floor of the porch extends inwards to the foyer, but is currently cracking due to poor support framework. Four brick pillars rise from the porch railing to the centered gabled roof. The entire building was re-bricked from the Seneca Brick Factory.

A one-story wooden portico on the north bay of the western façade was moved to the mid-section of the north side of the building in the 1907 renovation. Four turned posts supported a hipped roof. The floor is one-inch thick white pine, cut tongue and groove to fit. Supporting the hipped roof of the portico, ten inch by ten inch chamfered posts have molded caps and bases. The roof is covered with white pine sheathing boards.

The four panel doors surmounted by transoms provide entry into the building. All of the doors are box framed with galvanized iron trim. One-over-one, double hung sash fenestrate the building. Galvanized metal lintel hood surmount the arched windows of the 1907 structure. Basement windows pierce the western façade, the north and south elevations. Stone extends over basement windows eight inches longer than width of opening to form a cap. The six jail windows are covered with steel bars. The exterior walls are eight to twelve inches in thickness covered with uniform dark, red brick.

All the new windows constructed for the renovation were built with rusticated stone sills and topped with vertical placed bricks, but the first floor jail windows and the sheriff's residence windows built with cast iron sills are original. The roof received a face-lift during the renovations and a dormer added to the western façade. The stairway leading to the second floor has seven-eighth inch risers and one and one-fourth inch treads resting on two strong carriages. The handrail on the stairs is plain and measures two inches by four inches with one and three eighths inch turned baluster. The three rooms on the second floor were originally a chamber room and two rooms with grating for holding female prisoners and insane prisoners.

The basement under the Sheriff's residence has four rooms: on the north, the furnace rooms which measures a total of eleven feet six inches long by thirteen feet eight inches wide and on the south, the fuel rooms, which are eleven feet eight inches by thirteen feet eight inches. The stairs, located to the east of the fuel room, lead up to the first floor. The stairway has open risers with two-inch plank treads.

The jail and sheriff's residence share such a close proximity, that importance is placed equally between them now, but in 1879, the jail was the impressive feature to the editor of the Seneca Tribune as he describes the new facility in The Seneca Tribune article of October 1, 1879, headlined, A Model Prison:

*The main structure is two stories high, the front portion being designed as the jailer's residence, and the rear extension arranged as a prison. The most attractive feature, however, is the construction of the jail. The cells are made on the plan of Pauly's*

*celebrated patient steel-clad jail cells. There are three of the cells, each capable of accommodating four prisoners, and all provided with hammocks and bunks, giving them a look that would seem inviting were the formidable bolts and bars removed. The cells are arranged in a row, with excellent means of ventilation at the rear, while in front is a corridor, separated from the center corridor by open latticework, all made of the famous patented hardened steel that defies files, saws, or cold chisels. The entire top and bottom, all the outer walls of the cells, the rear and the corridor and the partition between the corridor and cells are made of plate work, hardened by the best process known, and are absolutely saw and file-proof. The sanitary arrangements are the most thorough that could be desired, the lattice work and the foul air ducts affording ample ventilation, white water closets, water-tank, pump, hose supply pipe, soil-pipe, etc., enable the jailer to always keep his prison clean.*

The original jail was only one-story and paved with brick laid in two inches of sand. All the floors, ceilings and partition walls in the jail cells were, and remain, 3/16-inch thick jail plate. The lathing and lattice sections were made of the patent hardened steel bars of two by 3/8 inches. Each cell had four twenty-eight inch wide hammocks, hung from angle irons set in the ceilings and iron loops on the sides of the cells. Each cell was six and half feet wide, eight feet deep and seven feet high, opening into a five-foot wide corridor. There was a privy and a sink in the rear of the corridor and a water tank outside the corridor. The cells, doors, locks and corridors are P.J. Pauley of St. Louis, Missouri, patented equipment.

The first floor of the residence was remodeled in 1907, keeping the original nine-foot ceilings in the three rooms, central hall, open stairway and a foyer. The hallway from western façade to stairway was removed, opening the parlor. A wall was removed in the north room allowing a larger dining room. The kitchen, sheriff's office and a small lavatory were added in the enlarged jail sector building. The sheriff's office was now centrally located with entrances to the kitchen, hall, foyer and the only passage into the jail. The renovated windows of the sheriff's office were built wider.

The interior walls of the two-story Sheriff's resident are lathed with white pine, two coats of brown mortar and finished with plaster. The floors throughout the residence are 7/8-inch thick mill worked oak wood. The second story hall and three rooms and the first story living room have been overlaid with two inch oak flooring. On the first floor of the residence are two rooms: the dining room and living room, which have four inch wood flooring. Leading into each room is a four-paneled door with ogee molding. On the south side of the residence is the living room, measuring twelve feet by fifteen feet, and on the north side is the twelve by ten feet dining room.

The major change in the second story residence was the removal of the female and insane cells. These rooms were transformed into family rooms. The renovations provided five rooms on the second floor, two closets and a bathroom for the Sheriff's residence. The building had steam heating until electricity and city water became available. In the 1907 renovation, the portico was moved from the western façade to the mid-section of the north side of the building, running east and west.

In 1955, the Nemaha County Commissioners decided that cracks in the brick exterior were caused by the weight of the tower and removed the cupola. In 1977, the Nemaha County Commissioners moved the jail facilities to another location to meet new requirements for

jail facilities. The Nemaha County Historical Society, Inc. purchased the building in 1978 for a museum. At that time the Historical Society renovated the interior and removed all the heating and plumbing except in the kitchen and lavatory. All of the rooms were returned to their original early 20th Century style. In 1995, the Harry C.M. Burger Memorial Annex, a non-contributing building, was added. The annex is located on the east side of the building, running north to south. The addition is one story high with cement foundations and the walls are brick. The windows are box-framed with brick sills. The entrance to the annex is through a door created from a former window opening from the jail.

Several large, old cedar trees and deciduous trees are located on the property. A school bell from a rural school, a hitching post, a flagpole and sign designating the building as a museum stand on the front (west) lawn. A column of the former Seneca high school (1878) is displayed on the northeast corner of the lawn. The cistern, which was located on the northern façade, has been filled with dirt.



## Significance

The Nemaha county jail and sheriff's residence (c. 1879, 1907) was nominated to the National Historic Registry for its historical association with the growth and development of Nemaha County. The building served as the county jail and sheriff's residence until 1976 when the Nemaha County Historical Society purchased the building for use as a museum. The building maintains a high degree of architectural integrity and is the oldest sheriff's residence and jail standing in Kansas.

Immigration to the area began in 1854 when Kansas was organized and given a government. The most prolific crops of corn, oats, and wheat interspersed with well-watered streams and well-timbered land prospered the new Kansas farmers. In 1858, the population of Seneca was only six residents. In less than ten years, the population swelled to three hundred one. By 1882, the area's population was one thousand, five hundred, and nineteen citizens. The Atchison & Pike's Peak, now the Missouri Pacific railroad, began to pass through Seneca in 1866, causing a rapid population growth. Many settlers moving westward would stop in Nemaha County and buy land without looking further.

The establishment of Seneca as the county seat of Nemaha County brought booming economic development, but not without some conflict. The new courthouse burned twice and after each episode, another election was held to choose the new county seat. Seneca won the third vote over Sabetha by promising a new courthouse as well as a new jail and sheriff's residence.

Prior to 1860, Nemaha County rarely needed a jail. The few prisoners that Nemaha County detained were lodged in various places, usually under guard, waiting on the tedious delays of the law. The first attempt at a jail in 1861 failed miserably as the twenty foot by thirty foot stone jail allowed tenants to escape easily. The County Commissioners put the proposition of a new jail on the ballot in the 1878 election. Once approved, Seneca accepted a bid from P.J. Pauley & Brothers, St. Louis, Missouri, to build the jail and residence for \$9,943 through their agent, C.L. Wundt and Company of Des Moines, Iowa. P.J. Pauley & Brothers had a respectable reputation for building the perfect jail. A.W. Burnett, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners supervised the building of the jail. Elbert Dumont, Seneca builder, was the local contractor. The October 6, 1879 minutes of the Board of Commissioners lists a check for \$9,943, payable to P.J. Pauley & Brothers.

Mr. P.J. Pauley, a German-American born in 1832, founded the Pauley Jail Building and Manufacturing Company in 1856. The Pauley family started the small business in St. Louis, Missouri as steamboat blacksmiths on the Mississippi River. River traffic was heavy at that time, and the business flourished. America pushed its western frontier further and further after the Civil War. Young P.J. Pauly, Sr., then 33, saw the development of an enormous business opportunity to house prisoners convicted of crimes until such time as the prisoner could be transferred to a state prison, often a considerable period of time. Harnessing his skills as a mechanic and blacksmith, Mr. Pauley began manufacturing small steel cages that were, at first, anchored to flat wagons. These cages were drawn from place to place to serve as "gaols" or jails. Thus began the Pauley family's involvement in the detention industry. Today (2003), P. J. Pauley, Sr.'s great-great grandsons, Robert James Pohrer and Joseph Pauly Pohrer III, continue the operation of the family business.

The Pauley Jail Building Company pioneered double ribbed bar and the development of the "tool resisting steel" with Crucible Steel Company. The company is credited with the development of the 4-S approach to the correctional industry, known as *Segregation-Sanitation-Safety*. This approach involved special plumbing fixtures that could never be clogged (Noverflo), the forerunner of the heavy hollow metal door and frame (Securidor), and a line of detention security windows (Invisiguard and Ventralite) which replaced the old exposed guards.

Architect P.J. Pauley, Jr. prepared plans, specifications and details for the jail and sheriff's residence. The new jail was designed to express the growth and expanding richness of the area through a popular architectural style, Italianate. Following the trend across the country, the prosperous farmers of Nemaha County encouraged a building of high style Italianate. Characterized by brackets, often doubled, which ornament the cornice, porches and hipped roofs that often appear flat, the building was similar to the new high school, which had been built in 1878 across the street from the jail. Within the concrete and brick walls of the jail, small cells were constructed of metal lattice while common jail bars enclosed other areas. Catwalks (corridors) surrounded the cell areas. To open the cell doors, the jailer entered the corridor and removed the padlocks, then retired, closing and locking the corridor door. The jailer removed the padlock from the lever (in the lever box) and pulled the lever, which slides the locking bars and released all the cell doors. The jail was seen as a model of neatness. The Seneca Tribune reported in the September 24, 1879 issue: *At first glance it appears more like a handsome dwelling than a jail. The beauty of the building allows Nemaha County to lay claim to having the handsomest jail in northern Kansas.*

William G. Cutler's History of the State of Kansas includes the biography of Elbert Dumont:

*Elbert Dumont, architect and builder, was born in 1847, in Seneca County, N. Y. During the Rebellion he served in the One Hundred and Eleventh New York Volunteer Infantry, ... was discharged from the army, attended school at the seminaries at Ovid and Fulton, N. Y., till the spring of 1878, when he went to DeKalb County Mo., to learn the carpenter trade. After living in Missouri three years, he came to Seneca, Nemaha County, Kan. For the last four years he has devoted his time to draughting and superintending. Among the jobs that he has had charge of are the Nemaha county jail...His wife was Mary E., daughter of O. C. Bruner an early settler of Nemaha County.*

Seneca continued to grow and expand into the 1900's, but the jail began to show signs of deterioration. *As a place of confinement, almost any old brick building would be as good. There has been some eight or ten jail escapes since the jail has been in use, and several important criminals have got away. The money spent in chasing escaped prisoners would have gone far towards making the jail sanitary and secure,* states the editor of the Courier Democrat in the August 10, 1905 issue.

Serious health problems arose due to unsanitary conditions in the jail. The floor in the corridor was an ordinary plank affair that was put down some sixteen years before over the brick and sand flooring. Time and moisture rotted the planks. One could take a stick and stir in the mud underneath. The cages had a steel bottom and were set on a cement floor, but the dampness had completely rusted through the steel bottoms in some places.

Several prisoners contacted rheumatism while in the jail. Obnoxious gases caused prisoners to feel nauseous. *Malaria was reported to be lurking throughout the entire premises. Then when one young man visited neighbors after being held at the hail, his clothing contaminated the house with a foul odor. His best shoes were covered in mildew and he looked sick. He went to the jail the picture of health and youth, and was released pale and sick from malaria.* (Courier Democrat 11/1906.)

Local architect John Y. Benfer, drew up plans for renovation of the jail. Born in 1844 in Union County, Pennsylvania and reared in Seneca County, Ohio, Mr. Benfer learned sign and carriage painting at an early age. He enlisted in the One Hundred and Twenty-third Ohio Volunteer Infantry, and served two years in the Shenandoah Valley, participated in the Winchester and other historic battles, served one year with the army of the James, was captured three times and once escaped, the third time being released at the surrender of Lee at Appomattox. At Winchester, he was wounded. After the war, he worked at his trade in Michigan and Indiana until 1900, when he located in Seneca, Kansas. He was a master of his trade and had a well ordered and occupied shop. Mr. John Benfer designed many houses and buildings in Seneca.

The renovation plans were kept on file at the County Clerks' office for several months while the County Commissioners discussed the matter of the jail. Bids were let out for the renovation, but later called off because of the high costs. The County Commissioners then appointed a citizen committee whose task it was to review the plans submitted by the architect and to determine their worth. The committee reported that *the sanitary conditions of said jail are very unwholesome and inadequate, and in our opinion cannot be well overcome without the alternations and repairs sought to be made by said plans. We think the plans are good and reasonable.* The County Clerk and the County Attorney were then assigned the responsibility of devising an advertisement asking for bids to repair the county jail according to the plans. After much deliberation, the County Commissioners awarded the contract to Shaul & Assenmacher, a known and reliable contractor, for a total of \$9,851.

Joseph Assenmacher of Shaul & Assenmacher settled in Seneca in 1867, where he made his home for forty-five years before moving to Lincoln, Nebraska so he could be closer to his major project of building part of the Nebraska State capital. He was considered to be one of the best builders in Seneca. He remodeled the old post office, was responsible for the brick blocks of Harsh's Drug Store and Routh's Shoe Store. He owned the opera house, constructed a hotel and built more than twenty residences in the city of Seneca.

George A. Shaul of Shaul & Assenmacher had a staunch and respected reputation in the area. He was believed to be one of the *most extensive contractors in Seneca's history.* Before his death in 1938, he built the Masonic Temple, city hall, the Eley hardware building and Dr. Thomson's office building within the city of Seneca. He also was instrumental in the organization and management of the Seneca Shale Brick Company, which was turning out 20,000 brick per day in 1916. He built at least ten public buildings in Nebraska and worked on approximately twelve federal post offices. He was responsible for the Nebraska State Farm Building in Lincoln, the Carnegie library at Lawrence, Kansas and for the Feeble Minded Institute at Beatrice. Mr. Shaul provided labor for a large number of Seneca workmen and was a committed defender of the area.



After some delay, the renovation project was completed on December 17, 1907. Once the sheriff took possession of the jail, the building was a model of security and served Nemaha County until 1977. On January 9, 1978, the jail property, which included the residence, jail, garage and lots were sold for \$19,500. The Nemaha County Historical Society purchased the site, funded through donations and fundraising activities.

The Nemaha County Jail retains a high degree of architectural integrity as an example of a turn-of-the century jail and sheriff's residence. *The low pitched roof, widely overhanging eaves, supported by decorative brackets, tall, narrow windows with elaborated window crowns of inverted-U shapes identifies the Italianate style of the late 1880's, even to the L-shaped compound-plan* as described by Virginia and Lee McAlester in A Field Guide to American Homes. Although the tower was added in the renovation of 1907, it was designed to be *characteristic of the Italian Villa*. Although the copula was removed by the commissioners in 1955, the tower continues to occupy the position where the residence joins the jail in the L-plan building.

The three original 1879 P.J. Pauley steel clad cells and the two cells installed in 1907 are in excellent condition. The jail floors, ceiling and partition walls made of three-sixteenths inch plate are pristine. All of the lathing, lattice section, and steel bars of the celebrated Pauley patent remain intact for viewing by the touring public. The jail embraces all the latest improvements for that time and continues today to display historical artifacts as a museum. Restoration and rehabilitation of the jail and sheriff's residence by the Nemaha County Historical Society is symbolic of the historical pride experienced by all community residents. Two non-contributing buildings, called the Harry C.M. Burger Memorial Annex I and Annex II were added behind the historic building. Entry to the Annex I from the original jail is through a door built from a jail window opening.

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